



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF
ENFORCEMENT AND
COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE

SPEECH

SUBJECT: Environmental Justice 10th Anniversary
FROM: John Peter Suarez
TO: EPA HQ, Washington, DC

INTRODUCTION

-WELCOME TO THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM, CELEBRATING THE
ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.

-WE ARE GATHERED TO PRAISE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THIS OFFICE,
YET, AS IS REFLECTED IN THE CELEBRATION'S SLOGAN, NO ONE IS RESTING
ON THEIR LAURELS. INSTEAD, WE ARE "MOVING FORWARD" AND LOOKING
TOWARD THE FUTURE, WHERE IT IS OUR GOAL TO SEE "ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION FOR ALL".

-AS YOU KNOW, OECA IS COMMITTED TO PROTECTING HUMAN HEALTH AND
THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ENFORCEMENT OF ALL APPLICABLE
ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND BY INCORPORATING ENVIRONMENTAL

JUSTICE ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF OUR PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND ACTIVITIES.

-THIS IS A KEY PRIORITY THAT SPANS EVERY DEPARTMENT OF OECA. THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN OECA'S DAY TO DAY OPERATIONS.

-I JUST WANT TO TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRESENT TO YOU THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN THE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, THE WORK THAT IS CONTINUING TO BE CARRIED OUT AND WILL ENDURE INTO THE FUTURE TO ENSURE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE ALL PEOPLE ARE SAFER AND BETTER PROTECTED.

IMPLEMENTATION

-FOR US IN OECA, IT STARTS BY FACTORING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTO THE FRONT END OF OUR PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESSES, INCLUDING MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENTS BETWEEN EPA HEADQUARTERS AND EPA REGIONAL OFFICES.

-AS OUR PARTNERS IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS, IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE COMMUNICATE TO BOTH STATES AND TRIBES OUR COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND REFLECT THAT IN OUR COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AND GRANTS.

-OECA ALSO HAS THE LEAD IN ENFORCEMENT PRIORITY SETTING, CASE SELECTION, AND TERMS SOUGHT IN SETTLEMENTS, WHICH ALL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO INCORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS.

RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

-HOWEVER, IT WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TO STOP THERE. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISN'T JUST IN THE PLANNING PROCESS, BUT WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT IN EJ COMMUNITIES THROUGH OECA'S SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS.

-THE SEPS POLICY NOW SPECIFICALLY EMPHASIZES CONSIDERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES IN THE SETTLEMENT OF AN ENFORCEMENT ACTION. THESE PROJECTS RESULT IN DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.

-ALSO, ORE IS NOW PILOTING EFFORTS, WHERE POSSIBLE, TO MAKE SURE INJUNCTIVE RELIEF OCCURS FIRST AT THOSE FACILITIES LOCATED IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.

-THESE EFFORTS GO A LONG WAY TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES MOST ADVERSELY AND DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS.

STRATEGIC

-THE ADMINISTRATOR CONTINUES TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR APPROACHES TO PROTECTION OF HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT TO BE STRATEGIC.

-IN REGARDS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, I BELIEVE WE ARE ABLE TO BE BOTH STRATEGIC AND SMART THROUGH OUR USE OF DATA. WE ARE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THESE COMMUNITIES WHO ARE AT A HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL RISK THROUGH THE USE OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS.

- OECA'S SMART ENFORCEMENT TARGETING AND COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NONCOMPLIANCE IN EJ COMMUNITIES AND IN TURN DIRECT PROGRAMMATIC RESOURCES ACCORDINGLY.

-AN EXAMPLE OF THIS CAN BE SEEN IN OUR CRIMINAL ENFORCEMENT DIVISION.

(ex.) AFTER IDENTIFYING AREAS IN WHICH INSTANCES OF HARM OR POTENTIAL HARM HAVE TAKEN PLACE, OECA'S CRIMINAL ENFORCEMENT TARGETING EFFORT FACTORS IN EJ BY OVERLAYING RECENT CENSUS DATA TO FURTHER IDENTIFY IF THESE AREAS ARE LOCATED IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.

-TO BE SMART, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE CONTINUE TO TAP THE VAST RESOURCE OF DATA THAT IS AVAILABLE TO US. WE ARE ALWAYS WORKING ON THE ENHANCEMENT OF DATA GATHERING AND IMPROVING DATA SYSTEMS. THIS IS REPRESENTED IN OUR CONTINUAL EMPHASIS ON THE FUNDING OF DATA IMPROVEMENT.

CHALLENGE

-HOWEVER, WITH ALL OF THE GREAT STRIDES THAT ARE BEING MADE TO REDUCE THE RISK OF ENVIRONMENTAL HARM IN EJ COMMUNITIES, THERE STILL REMAINS THE CHALLENGE FOR US OF SHOWCASING THESE EFFORTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

-A MAJOR GOAL FOR OECA IS TO CAPTURE THE NATIONWIDE ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS OF EPA'S ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS ACCURATELY AND ADEQUATELY.

-INCORPORATED INTO THAT MISSION, WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE EJ SUCCESSES EFFECTIVELY TO THE PUBLIC AND, ESPECIALLY, TO EJ COMMUNITIES.

- PEOPLE IN THIS AGENCY ARE DOING GOOD WORK WHICH IS BRINGING

ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS AND PROTECTING YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE IN EJ COMMUNITIES, THIS STORY NEEDS TO BE TOLD. IT RIGHTFULLY BOOSTS PEOPLE'S TRUST IN THE EPA AND THE CREDIBILITY OF THE WORK WE ARE DOING WITHIN THESE COMMUNITIES.

STILL DO MORE-LEARNING

-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IS BEING WEAVED INTO THE FABRIC OF ALL THAT WE ARE DOING IN OECA. YET, BECAUSE THIS IS A RELATIVELY NEWER INITIATIVE, WE ARE STILL LEARNING.

-I BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO FULLY INTEGRATE EJ INTO ITS PROGRAMS AND POLICIES IS TO PROVIDE EJ TRAINING TO OECA EMPLOYEES AND OUR STATE AND TRIBAL PARTNERS.

-WE CONTINUE TO REVIEW OUR OUTREACH STRATEGIES TO BE SURE THAT THEY ARE ENCOMPASSING EJ COMMUNITIES.

-FOR EXAMPLE, OECA HAS ASKED FOR THE NEJAC ENFORCEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE TO PROVIDE ADVICE ON HOW EPA CAN IMPROVE THE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF OUR COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE TOOLS.

-OECA WILL USE INTEGRATED STRATEGIES INCLUDING COMPLIANCE MONITORING, COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE, ENFORCEMENT AND INCENTIVES

TO MORE EFFECTIVELY PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH
IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.

CONCLUSION

-AS I CLOSE, I WANT TO STRESS THAT THIS IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT PRIORITY,
NOT ONLY ARE WE FACTORING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTO EVERY
POLICY AND PROGRAM. BUT IN THE PROCESS, WE ARE ALSO UTILIZING
EVERY AVAILABLE TOOL IN EVERY SINGLE DEPARTMENT TO ACHIEVE OUR
GOAL OF “ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR ALL”, BOTH NOW, AND FOR
FUTURE GENERATIONS.

THANK YOU